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SUBJECT: TURKEY: NGO'S PRESENT KURDISH SOLUTIONS TO A
DISTRACTED GOT

Classified By: Consulate Adana Principal Officer Eric Green, reasons 1.
4 (b),(d)

Summary and Comment

¶1. (C) A broad coalition of Diyarbakir civil society organizations sent a delegation to Ankara this week to present a series of recommendations on how the government can address the Southeast's socio-economic problems. On the economic side, the recommendations focus on improving the effectiveness of numerous government investment programs and encouraging additional spending on local infrastructure, particularly the irrigation network. For dealing with the political dimensions of the Kurdish issue the report calls for adopting a "civilian and democratic" constitution that reflects EU values and spells out specific measures to loosen restrictions on Kurdish language and cultural expression. By steering clear of the amnesty question (and other issues closely associated with the terrorist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)), the report's advocates may get more traction in their efforts to persuade the GOT that it can make meaningful progress on the Kurdish issue before facing the more politically divisive questions.

¶2. (C) The AKP will approach the Kurdish issue in the coming months through the prism of its closure court case. The party may consider accelerating the EU agenda progress on broad democratic reforms to be in its interest, but will likely be more cautious on Kurdish-specific initiatives on language/cultural rights lest it be accused of conceding to PKK demands. End summary and comment.

A Pragmatic Manifesto

¶3. (U) A coalition of business, human rights and women's organizations from Turkey's southeast spent part of the week in Ankara meeting with political parties, Prime Minister Erdogan and President Gul to present a report with recommendations for achieving socio-economic progress on the Kurdish issue. The report contains dozens of recommendations, including:

--The State must play a more active role in infrastructure development in the region and ensure that state investment is distributed fairly.

--The New Incentive (subsidy) Law must focus on the southeastern region and should prioritize highly competitive sectors to create higher value-added industries in the region.

--A civilian international airport must be built in Diyarbakir to serve the region and more ring roads must be built to facilitate regional transportation. (The current airport in Diyarbakir is controlled by the Turkish Air Force.)

--Investment for building border gates, infrastructure and highways must urgently be expedited to promote border trade with neighboring countries.

--The GAP (Southeastern Anatolian Project) must be restructured to ensure more equal distribution of resources to the nine GAP provinces and the GAP irrigation plans must be completed quickly.

--The EU and democratization process must continue with determination; the following steps must be taken to open the path for solving the Kurdish problem:

- a- All restrictions on freedom of expression and cultural rights must be removed.
- b- All restrictions on broadcasting in non-Turkish languages in public and private broadcasting media must be removed.
- c- Educational institutions at all levels should offer education in the mother tongue as an elective course.
- d- Kurdish Language, History, and Literature departments or institutions should be opened in universities.
- e- Services must be provided in the mother tongue at public institutions and offices.
- f- Kurdish names should be restored to villages in the region.
- g- The Political Parties Law should become democratic and the

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election threshold must be lowered from 10 percent to a just level.

h- A comprehensive project to address the economic and social problems of people who were forced to migrate from their villages must be implemented.

The Dialogue Continues, But Hopes are Dim

14. (C) The emphasis on economic recommendations reflects the influence of the business organizations and the group's desire to show that it is pushing ideas that the government can achieve politically. (One human rights organization withdrew from the delegation because it wanted more political recommendations included.) Sahismail Bedirhanoglu, the president of GUNSIAD, a business association, explained to us the group talked about amnesty for PKK fighters in their briefings but did not include the topic in the report because they do not believe the GOT is prepared to take action on amnesty in the near future. If the proposals the NGOs recommended are implemented, he said, then civil society institutions would be in a better position to pressure the PKK to give up its weapons.

15. (C) Bedirhanoglu also confirmed media reports that during the group's meeting with PM Erdogan, the PM and Diyarbakir Bar Association President Sezgin Tanrikulu got into a heated debate over the question of language rights for Kurds, prompting Tanrikulu to walk out of the meeting early. Another participant in the meeting, AKP deputy Abdullահrahman Kurt, told us that the PM and Tanrikulu have butted heads in the past, but that he and others in the room told Erdogan that Tanrikulu should be respected because he is a constructive force in the region.

16. (C) Kurt believes the PM will determine the pace of the reforms, but warned that he will be cautious about moving "too rapidly" on language/culture/democratization reforms because he does not want to be criticized for being too lenient on the PKK. He added the AKP closure case will also

inevitably distract the government from making rapid progress in the southeast. Bedirhanoglu echoed this pessimism, noting the NGOs held these meetings in order to keep the conversation going on the Kurdish issue, but their hopes of significant progress in the coming months are diminishing.

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